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PAN-AMERICAN FEMINISM AND THE INTER-AMERICAN ORIGINS OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS, 1915 TO 1946

Principal Investigator: Katherine Marino, Department of History

Katherine Marino's work provides historical depth and transnational contextualization to notions of human rights, state sovereignty, diplomacy in the Americas, international law, and international women's rights.

Grounded in the histories of social movements, women and gender, and international relations, this book project examines how transnational feminism in the interwar years shaped inter-American diplomacy and influenced the formation of international human rights.

Marino's book explores a network of U.S. and Latin American women's rights leaders and diplomats who, through Pan-American inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, pioneered the first international laws in women's rights.

Ultimately, this group was responsible for pushing women's rights into the framework of international human rights at the 1945 creation of the United Nations following World War II.

In addition to revealing a diversity of approaches to feminism in the Americas, Marino's research uncovers the strong role that Latin American feminists and diplomats together played in shaping international human rights. Their formulation of international human rights sought to uphold state sovereignty and liberal multilateralism in the face of U.S. hegemony.

Marino reveals that the idea of "women's rights are human rights," often assumed to be a product of U.S.-Western European liberal democratic and feminist thought, was in fact forged through transnational collaboration in a context of fraught U.S.-Latin American relations and merged socialist and liberal feminist traditions.

Drawing on transnational concepts of feminism and liberal internationalism, Pan-American activists championed a broad definition of human rights that included not only equal political and civil rights but also equal social and economic justice for men and women, as well as international multilateralism.

This research also contributes to new histories of Pan-Americanism, showing how gendered concerns advanced inter-American alliances in ways that sometimes mirrored and other times clashed with official U.S. State-Department-led hemispheric goals.

Marino reveals the key role that debates around women's rights and feminists themselves played in forging broader definitions of inter-American multilateralism, democracy, and human rights, and in official Pan-American diplomacy.

As the first transnational and sustained history of Pan-American feminism, Marino's book is rooted in multinational archival research from the United States, Cuba, Panama, Uruguay, and Chile, where she examined extensive diplomatic, organizational, and personal papers.

Funding from the Mershon Center supported Marino's research trip to Brazil, where she investigated the archives of Brazilian feminist and diplomat Bertha Lutz, one of the central figures in her project, at the Arquivo Nacional and Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty, both in Rio de Janeiro. Marino also did research in the Arquivo do Estado de São Paulo.



This research will enable Marino to finish her book manuscript, in which both the University of Pennsylvania Press and Harvard University Press have expressed interest.

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